



LUSH VALLEY

2018 COMOX VALLEY FOOD SECURITY SURVEY FOR MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

RESPONSES FROM COMOX VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA DIRECTOR & SCHOOL TRUSTEE CANDIDATES

Total Number of Surveys Sent to Electoral Area Candidates: 11

Total Number of Candidates who Responded: 1

CANDIDATE NAME: ARZEENA HAMIR

Candidate Position: Electoral Area Director - CVRD Electoral Area B (Lazo North)

- 1. In the Comox Valley, we estimate that 1 in 5 people experience poverty and food insecurity. Healthy food and community food engagement have been shown to lead to significant long-term health and well-being outcomes, especially for children. If elected, what would you do to ensure all residents have access to healthy food? How will you support community-based food security programs?**

Food insecurity is such a multi-pronged problem that there are no short answers to these questions. In the Comox Valley, in my humble opinion, food insecurity is directly tied to lack of affordable housing. People are using more than 30% of their income to pay for a roof over their heads that there isn't much left to purchase healthy food. In the short-terms, we need to make sure people are fed using all the emergency measures available: food banks, community meals, and distribution of excess fruit and vegetables.

In the medium term, supporting (with funding) the BC Farmer's Market Coupon program so that more families have access to healthy, local food; supporting community kitchen programs that train families and individuals how to prepare healthy meals on a budget, and ensuring that the Food Bank is providing the healthiest choices possible in the most dignified distribution method.

In the long terms, our affordable housing groups and food security groups need to work together to identify ways that we can make big impacts. I think the Braidwood model is an excellent one, especially seeing that LUSH is also involved. We need more of that dispersed throughout the community. I would support a Council or and Advisory Board that reports to the CVRD with recommendations on how to do this work in a integrated way that also uses our resources and capacity in the most efficient manner.

LUSH Valley Food Action Society

T: 250-331-0152

E: admin@lushvalley.org

PO Box 20008, Courtenay, BC V9N 0A7

CRA # 866653637RR0001



LUSH VALLEY

- 2. A Vancouver Island Region Food Charter has been written and supported by food security organizations across Vancouver Island (these are funded by *Island Health*). It sets out a vision for a health-oriented, local and equitable food system. If elected, would you support the adoption of this Food Charter for your jurisdiction?**

Yes

- 3. The development of progressive food security policy is important at all levels of government. If elected, would you support the development of a Municipal/Regional Food Policy Council? Would you advocate for local jurisdictions to work with other levels of government on food security issues? What food security issues do you see as being a priority for this region?**

Yes, especially if it included elected officials, First Nations representatives as well as representatives from the major non-profits who are working in food security and affordable housing. I would love to see research done at Braidwood that looks at, once stable housing is established, what are the outcomes for food security? Also, we have so much produce here in the valley that, even after LUSH picks and delivers a large majority, still goes to waste. How can we create some kind of social enterprise that turns food overproduction into a value-added, shelf stable product that helps sustain our community.

- 4. In 2010, the region created a comprehensive [Sustainability Strategy](#). If elected, will you encourage the adoption of relevant ‘food security actions’ outlined in the strategy?**

Yes, with appropriate changes to the time frames. It’s time that Strategy was adopted and activated.

- 5. Would you support using municipal/regional lands and infrastructure to develop local food systems (e.g. farmers’ markets, community gardens, land leasing, etc). If yes, what would be your first priority?**

I am personally involved at looking at the Old Thrifty’s site to convert into a community food hub that would be a permanent location for the Farmer’s Market. This is a long-term, future goal. I would also love to see more food production activity at CVEX, including incubator farms for young people wanting to train in agriculture. Although I am a huge supporter of community gardens, I would look to the public to figure out where they would make sense and where there is demand I believe the City of Courtenay has already done a scan of their publicly owned sites and a short list could easily be created.



LUSH VALLEY

As for land leasing, absolutely. Our Economic Development Society should be put to task to increase the amount of land in production in the valley. I would love to see a dedicated staff person who looks at our food system as the economic driver it really is. We produce \$30 million of agricultural products in this valley but are only using 36% of our land base actively. We need to do more. Climate change is putting our food supply in a precarious position and soon we may soon realize how food insecure every one of us is on Vancouver Island .

6. What will you do to increase awareness of food insecurity and address related issues such as poverty and affordable housing?

Bring up the subjects as much as possible and help people connect the dots. The Comox Valley is an extremely welcoming community but we need to ensure everyone has a safe, comfortable space to live in, where they have enough food, and where they can be active members of society.

7. Do you have any other comments related to food security you would like to share?